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by

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on

**INDIAN WOMEN TODAY: A LEGACY OF THE PAST MASCULINITY
AND THE PRESENT EMPOWERMENT PROCESS**

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Abstract

Women in our society have so far had only secondary status. They have not been treated equally with men. In spite of their good ideological position they could not enjoy the pleasure of acquiring knowledge from rich Sanskrit literature with other ordinary men till recent past. The western industrial culture that diffused in most of the societies in the world equated women with nature as both have reproductive functions. And nature is perceived as being inferior to culture, which is thought of as being the domain of men. Hence, women are less valuable than men. Probably, for this well constructed dichotomy between men and women, the status of the latter have been devaluated or the latter have not been provided with the basic capabilities to participate in and to contribute to society. Also, this demarcation made easier to maximize utility of men subject to nature and women.

The objectives of the paper are (i) to trace the path of deprivation of women in India, (ii) to chronicle condition and progress of the States in the empowerment process, and (iii) to relate women's empowerment with various aspects of life.

UNDP-methods are available to measure quality of life in various dimensions. However, application of those in gender specific studies is not always possible for unavailability of data at local level. Although methodological and data problems are there, this paper tries to find the best possible way to project the true picture prevailing in India for better understanding the role of development on women and also women in development.

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**INDIAN WOMEN TODAY: A LEGACY OF THE PAST MASCULINITY AND
THE PRESENT EMPOWERMENT PROCESS**

Introduction

Women in India, as in many other societies, enjoy only a secondary status. Their many contributions in the home, the work place, and the community are overlooked and undervalued (UNFPA, 1995). In most of the developing countries they often derive status from child-bearing and child-rearing. This experience is rooted in failure to value women for anything but their reproductive role. The issue has been addressed many times by scholars and thinkers across cultures and societies. In India from the period of renaissance, social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindran Nath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and many others realized the suffering of women and emphasized greatly on women's participation in their revival programmes. Their ideas have been brought forward, rejuvenated or interpreted many times in many ways at national and international conferences with or without acknowledgement. Developments took place within the country or outside help the Government to formulate appropriate policies at national level to raise the status of women. National Commission for Women has been set up in 1992 to address the issues related to violence, denial and deprivation (Mehendale, 2000). The Ninth Five Year Plan emphasized on women's empowerment for a social change and development. Today a wide range of government and non-governmental functionaries are working for the empowerment of women. However, the programmes, which are heavily influenced and funded by Western bodies, are to attack and replace our traditional values only meaning these are at the root cause of women's deprivation in India. For better understanding of the problem a study from holistic point of view is necessary as it may reveal something more than our present belief or at least make the matter clear.

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Objective

The objectives of the paper are (i) to trace the path of deprivation of women in India, (ii) to chronicle condition and progress of the States in the empowerment process, and (iii) to relate women's empowerment with various aspects of life.

Review of Literature

Empowerment of Women: Empowering of women means extending choices: choices about education, employment opportunities, about if and when to get married, controlling the social and physical environment and so on. Empowerment requires that husbands, partners, family members, and communities help to promote a healthy environment free from coercion, violence or abuse, in which women are free to use community services on a basis of equality (UNFPA, 1994). According to the ICPD Programme of Action, bringing women into the mainstream of development is an important end in itself, as well as key to improving the quality of life of everyone (UNFPA, 1995).

The Legacy of Past Masculinity: It is believed that millions of years ago our monkey ancestors did not live in pairs, but instead moved about in semi-nomadic groups. There was no division of labour, each adult used to find food for herself or himself without any aid from others. Monkey groups at that time were mostly herbivorous. However, over the age they became bipedal and developed the habit of eating meat. This meat-eating element of our primeval ancestors had a profound effect on our social organization. In search of bigger prey strongest males had to set off on organized expeditions – making closest bonds and sharing intellects among each other. Women on the other hand restricted themselves in activities that were far more individualistic – rearing children and in their spare time gathering locally available vegetables, etc. This division of labour is thought to have been partly responsible for the development of slightly different temperament and personality between the early males and females (Moris and Marsh, 1988). So, we see that two categories, as those are termed today, 'masculine' and

'feminine' are socially and culturally constructed and have root somewhere in the hunter-gatherer stage of our cultural evolution.

According to gender-based ideology, these two categories and the status of women as the 'second sex' are biologically determined. This ideology views 'man-the-hunter' as being the superior than 'women-the-gatherer'. Instead of taking part actively to contribute to society, women became a burden and hence dependent on men because they were unable to provide even for the children they brought into the world. Their frequent natal activities might have absorbed their time and made them weaker than men (Beauvoir, 1972).

The myth of masculine creativity and female passivity however, does not clearly reveal the economic dependence of the latter on the former. Some writers project that the survival of mankind has been due much more to 'women-the-gatherer' than to 'man-the-hunter' (Siva, 1988). Lee and Vore (1968) have shown empirically that among the existing hunters and gatherers, up to 80 percent of daily food was collected by women and the remaining portion by men from hunting. Fisher (1979) also agreed with the fact that collecting vegetables was more important for our early ancestors than hunting. Mies (1986) have also supported the fact that men's contribution was less as compared to that of the women. She viewed hunters' activities as violent as those were related to destruction of life and argued that humanity could not have survived if their contribution had been the basis for the daily requirements for our early ancestors. Mukherjee (1996) in her empirical study, conducted in two villages of District Midnapore, also found that women are more responsible for family subsistence.

A new phase of domination of men over women started again in the modern period after the scientific and industrial revolutions of Europe. Bacon (1561-1626), who is known as the father of modern science, advocated a patriarchal project conjugating masculine and scientific domination over nature, women and the non-west (Siva, 1988). Bacon's objective was to set up 'a blessed race of heroes and supermen' who would dominate both nature and society (Keller, 1985). The western development model, which was inspired by Bacon's philosophy, is also proved to be a masculine-project. The model has been executed in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America through colonization of land, forest, river and people... The culture associated with it equated women with nature

as both have reproductive functions. And nature is perceived as being inferior to culture, which is thought of as being the domain of men (Siva, 1988). The idea that women are seen as close to nature was presented first by Ortner (1974) who also sees the connection as rooted in biology. However, according to Dalmia (1998), this phenomenon is symbolic or ideological and can be presented in equation: women = child bearers = nature = the less valuable. As both women and nature are perceived as less valuable, parallel oppression of both goes together. This idea has been taken a step forward by Siva (1988) as she adds material aspects with ideology (Agarwal, 1990). According to Siva, women in India and in the third world are dependent on nature for drawing sustenance for themselves, their families and societies. The destruction of nature thus becomes the destruction of women's sources for staying alive. As the earth is rapidly dying today with all her forests, water and air – this, may be the beginning of their (women's) marginalisation, devaluation, displacement and ultimate dispensability (see also Agarwal, 1990).

The above review reveals that up to medieval period women have been dominated by men culturally. They have not been dependent of men economically. Only in the modern period the cultural deprivation takes the form of economic deprivation through exploitation of nature. The mechanism could be summarized in this way: as the objective of the western development model is to maximize profit subject to nature and women (and also the non-west), it devaluated nature and women adopting its epistemology of reductionism. Adverting to the devaluation of nature first we can see, to this model forest is nothing but a timber depot, river is nothing but a source of water, mountain is nothing but motionless mass, and so on though all those have distinct bodies. And heavy exploitation of those either reduces the domain of women for collecting subsistence or quality of it. Privatization of community resources and village commons also make the life of rural Indian women harder (Jodha, 1986). The job of collecting food, fodder, water and other subsistence now became much harder and also quite time consuming. Women take bigger tasks and responsibilities for families' subsistence. However, their ability to fulfil this responsibility is significantly affected by the limited and declining resources and means at their command (Mukherjee, 1996). Rural women are being made poor, in this way, and dependent on men. This may be a threat for urban poverty also. According

to a study (UNFPA, 1996) many of the *new* urban dwellers, particularly women and their children, will be among the poorest people in the world.

Another form of deprivation comes directly from the under-valuation of women's work or contribution. The third form of deprivation is easily understood as women have been excluded from or have not been allowed to participate in the development projects.

Ideology and Practices in India: Finding status of women from Indian religious literature is not easy because of our cultural and philosophical pluralities. Also there are prudent disparities between ideology and practices. In Indian cosmology relationship between Purasa and Prakriti has been presented in different ways. Sometime Prakriti is looked as dancing girls in front of ever-watchful Purasa (Shiva) -- meaning the evolution of multiplicity is a co-operative project of Prakriti and Purasa. In another presentation Prakriti is defined as the primordial power, Shakti, which is self-sufficient -- do not need any thing else for creation (Dalmia, 1998). From the above two principles it is clear that ideologically women have been given either an equal or a higher status than that of men. However, it is well known that, till recent past women had no access to rich Sanskrit literature with other ordinary men.

In some Hindu texts marriage is thought essential for all women and bringing forth a son (putra) is necessary for a couple as it saves the father from going hell. On the other hand daughter (kanya) is desirable as 'kanyadana' adds to the punya of the parents. As quoted in Bhande and Kanitkar (1990), the traditional Hindu couples have always been blessed by their elders as: "May you have eight sons and five daughters". Though it is very difficult to find the meaning of those texts and also the meaning we find may not be actually the one which those texts tried to endorse, a clear indication of son preference is there in early Hindu writings. These may have strategic or astrological interpretations. However, in practice also, across cultures and societies in India, a wide disparity (on many fronts) persists between males and females. Male foetuses, male infants get different treatment than female ones! Though female foetuses and infants are proved to be biologically stronger than male ones sex differential in morbidity and mortality goes in favour of male. Access to education is also not same for boys and girls. Dropout rate is

higher for girls than boys. Rights of women towards making decisions on economic issues and/or on family size and/or on health and so on are very restricted.

Although women have traditionally been excluded from being treated equally and so far have had little opportunity to establish their own position in the social hierarchy, they are today making up for these through the formation of groupings as diverse as feminist-oriented social and political organizations across the globe.

Need for the Study

Literature on the empowerment process in India is growing rapidly. However, studies from a holistic point of view on this issue are less extensive and less known. Basu (1996) examined the prevailing situation in India just after the Cairo-'94 and Beijing-'95 conferences. Looking at country level data on education, health, employment, politics, bureaucracy, etc. she found a wide gap between the goals and de facto situation. Pattanaik's (1996, 1997, 2000) studies focussed on women's present status 'in a patriarchal society' and/or 'religiously orthodox families' and initiated discussions on women's education, health, political participation, etc. with the interpretation of available data at national level. Joshi (1997) has mentioned in one place her article that though women have contributed significantly in every sphere of life, yet for various historical, social, religious and cultural reasons and in spite of many constitutional guarantees and legislative measures, women still remained backward and short of their rightful place in society. She has not paid attention to 'various reasons' behind women's backwardness and probably for this reason she mentioned in another place that 'modernization and westernization have not really spelt liberation for the average Indian women'. Rao and Lakshmi (1997) interpreted the findings of Human Development Report 1996 and expressed their concern about the increasing gap between our glorious past – rhetoric and reality. Chaturvedi and Chaturvedi (1999) found in UP Hills (now in Uttaranchal) a strong bias against female workers. Hill women work thrice as much as the males and get poor economic rewards. Bhattacharyya's (1999) study is to say that in a society rising level of education especially female education is associated with a sharp decline in poverty. Narasimhan (2000) projects the fact that empowerment in the real sense of

quality of life, does not necessarily follow with rising money income or longer life spans. A woman may live in the midst of material comforts in a luxurious palace, and yet be powerless in terms of self-assertion or autonomy over her own life. With economic, social, and political empowerment she also talks about psychological empowerment. In this section she blames Indian cultural ideology, as it is responsible for women's psychological deprivation. However, no ideological formulation has been done in this regard. Padmanabhn (2001) has expressed his concern for the increasing participation of women in agriculture and other related primary activities as gradual decrease in arable land and increasing environmental pollution reduces women's scope to earn livelihood. As a suggestive measure he advocates empowering rural women through proper training and extension services.

The above review reveals that growing literature on empowerment of women in India accepted women's secondary status as a resultant of cultural rigidity and /or religious orthodoxy or simply as an economic phenomenon. No study traces the path of women's deprivation or derives any ideological formulation of deprivation. When the path is unknown, root is unidentified and forms are not clear then it is very difficult to address a particular problem. Regarding the condition and progress of the States in the empowerment process, no study utilized State level data covering all related dimensions according to background characteristics of population. Population Foundation of India (PFI) has been publishing The State of India's Population since 1998, which contains HDI (at State level), and other reproductive health related indices. However, GDI and GEM are not computed at State level may be due to unavailability of data or methodological problems. Arumugam (1999) made an attempt to measure level of human development for 29 Districts in Tamil Nadu using the UNDP method. He expressed his concerns as there is no uniformity and universally acceptable method to measure level of development at regional levels. Also as differences in the level of development at local levels may exist for uneven resources, endowment, variation in infrastructure facilities, differences in access to public utility services, measuring human development at regional levels with the three indicators is questionable. Though methodological problems and difficulties are there the present study makes an attempt to address all these issues.

Data used and Sources

In order to chronicle condition and progress of the empowerment process in the 16 major States of India this study focuses on various aspects of life (in rural and urban areas): education, autonomy, health, work (to be comprehended as unpaid work) and nurture.

Education: completed years of education for both males and females (all ages).

Autonomy: percentage of women in the reproductive period (15-49) involved in decision making for their own health care and percentage of women (15-49) with access to money.

Health: Both morbidity and mortality statistics have been utilized.

Morbidity: percentage of women (15-49) with anaemia.

Mortality: age-specific death rates for both males and females (15-44).

Work: percentage of women (15-49) besides their normal house keeping, work in family farm/business.

Nurture: Total Fertility Rates, TFR (15-49).

The study mostly utilized NFHS-2 data at State level. For all variables, except mortality, sources of data are Preliminary Reports of National Family Health Survey, 1998-99 (NFHS-2) for 16 major States (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujrat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) published by the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai (1999). For mortality, source of data is Sample Registration System, SRS, 1997 published by the Office of The Registrar General, Government of India.

Method

This study measures women's empowerment in various dimensions of life: education, autonomy, health, work and nurture. 7 indicators from the above four dimensions have been chosen taking into account the 6 basic criteria of a measure of socio-economic performance (Morris, 1980). Separate indices have been computed for each of the 7

indicators and put in 0-1 scale. The Index of Empowerment (of women) is the simple average of those.

Education: Women’s empowerment not only means educating women but also closing the gender gap. In the empowerment process both can be captured if the ratio of literacy between male and female are considered. However, in order to take into account both quantity and quality one can take completed years of education on an average by a male and female and ratio of those. Now, an index can be computed for education from these ratios for the States for rural and urban population and put in 0-1 scale.

NFHS–2 reports are giving information on education of usual-resident household population as: percentage of men and women (all ages) --

- Illiterate,
- Literate, < primary school complete,
- Primary school complete (means 5-7 completed years of education),
- Middle school complete (means 8-9 completed years of education),
- High school complete (means 10-11 completed years of education),
- Higher secondary complete and above (means 12 or more completed years of education).

From the information given as above it is possible to compute average years of education at least, that a woman or a man have completed. If we assume that in the above 6 categories men and women have completed at least 0, 3, 5, 8, 10, and 12 years of education respectively then on an average per person (at least) completed years of education can be computed.

Table (Example): 1. West Bengal (urban)

	% F	% M	YEARS	%F*YEAR	%M*YEAR
Illiterate	22.9	10.9	0	0	0
<Primary	22.5	19.0	3	67.5	57
Primary	16.5	16.4	5	82.5	82
Middle	14.4	15.2	8	115.2	121.6
High	9.1	13.8	10	91	138
12+	14.4	24.7	12	172.8	296.4
Total	100	100	-	529	695

F: Female. M: Male

Weighted Average: Female = $529/100 = 5.29$ years

Male = $695/100 = 6.95$ years.

As the denominator is always 100, any change (quantitative = increasing participation, and/or qualitative = lengthening the period) in the numerator would increase the score. The minimum and maximum completed years of education are 1.352 years (Female, Rural-Rajasthan), 8.164 years (Male, Urban-Himachal Pradesh). However, when we present completed years of education of female as a proportion to that of the male then the minimum and maximum values are 0.329 (Tamil Nadu, Rural) and 1.075 (Maharashtra, Urban). The figure 1.075 indicates that in Urban-Maharashtra women are better educated than men (qualitatively 107.5 percent higher) and the gender gap goes in favour of women. However, in Rural-Tamil Nadu the gender gap highly disfavours women. Women have been able to achieve 33 percent of the level that the men have achieved.

Autonomy: Empowerment means women's freedom in decision making. NFHS-2 provides information on selected indicators of women's (15-49) autonomy and status. This study considers two of them: decision on own health care and access to some amount of money that can be spent on their own. Data are available as percentage of women in rural and urban area involved in decision making. Separate indices have been computed for the two indicators mentioned above. The minimum and maximum values are:

Own Health Care: 34.2 % (Rural-Madhya Pradesh) and 82.4 % (Urban-Himachal Pradesh).

Access to money: 32.9 % (Rural-Bihar) and 90.7 (Urban Himachal Pradesh).

Health: Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1961). An index of empowerment will not be complete if we ignore this aspect(s) of life. To assess health condition we have considered both morbidity and mortality.

Morbidity: Morbidity means the state of illness and disability in a population (from Latin *morbus*, disease). NFHS-2 provides data on iron-deficiency anaemia prevailing among ever married women (15-49). Anaemia is a condition that results when the level of haemoglobin in blood is too low. It usually results from a nutritional deficiency of iron, folate, vitamine B₁₂ and some other nutrients. Anaemia has a detrimental effect on women's health (see NFHS-2 preliminary reports).

The minimum and maximum values (women having no anaemia) are: 26.4 per cent (Rural Maharashtra) and 79.7 per cent (Urban-Kerala).

Mortality: Standardized death rates have been computed for males and females (15-44) from the age-specific death rates assuming female age-structure of Andhra Pradesh for all the 16 States. The ratios of female to male death are then computed to construct the index. The age group has been truncated here because the extent of fertility is negligible after the age 44 as depicted by the age pattern of fertilities from NFHS-2. Women die more than their male counterparts in this age group for reproductive functions. Male mortality is also high in this group because of professional/outdoor activities, accidents, etc. Though procreation of children is a joint project of husband and wife, the index of mortality will roughly reflect the ultimate suffering (or free from all suffering!) of the 'second sex'. Maternal Mortality Ratio won't serve our purpose here. It is related to live births only and considers maternal death within 42 days after the termination of pregnancy.

Table (Example) 2. West Bengal (rural)

	ASDR-M	ASDR-F	AGE-AP	DETH-M	DETH-F
15-19	1.677	2.607	8.426	14.130	21.967
20-24	1.828	2.761	9.703	17.737	26.790
25-29	1.771	2.655	8.481	15.020	22.602
30-34	3.324	2.390	8.026	26.678	19.182
35-39	3.157	2.578	6.187	19.532	15.950
40-44	5.460	4.478	5.867	32.034	26.272
Total	-	-	46.690	125.132	132.763

ASDR: Age specific death rate, AGE: Age distribution

Standardized Death Rate, SDR (15-44) for: male = $125.132/46.69 = 2.680$ per thousand

Female = $132.763/46.69 = 2.842$ per thousand.

The minimum and maximum SDRs found in this study are 0.928 per thousand (Female, Urban-Himachal Pradesh) and 4.394 per thousand (Female, Rural-Assam). However, when female deaths are expressed as proportions of male deaths then minimum and maximum values are 0.507 (Rural-Himachal Pradesh) and 1.635 (Urban-Assam). The figures indicate that sex-differential in mortality goes in favour of females in Rural Himachal Pradesh and highly disfavours females in Urban-Assam.

Work and Nurture: House keeping and rearing children are almost universal for Indian women. They spend most of their energy, intellect and time in doing those. A larger

family size (number of living children) aggravates the situation. The situation is more painful when women, besides their normal activities, engaged themselves in family farm/business from where usually they do not get any remuneration in cash. To spread some light on these aspects of life this study took 2 indicators, namely percentage of women engaged in family farm/business and Total Fertility Rate, TFR.

Work: Minimum and maximum values found are 0.300 per cent (Rural-Punjab) and 37.300 per cent (Rural-Rajasthan).

TFR: Minimum and maximum values found are 1.500 (Urban-Assam) and 4.270 (Rural-Uttar Pradesh).

7 indices have been computed using the formulae:

$$I = (\text{observed value} - \text{minimum value}) / (\text{maximum value} - \text{minimum value}) \text{ or}$$

$$I = (\text{maximum value} - \text{observed value}) / (\text{maximum value} - \text{minimum value}).$$

The index of empowerment (I – emp) is the simple average of those. Higher values mean higher degrees of empowerment.

Combined index of empowerment is nothing but the weighted average of the rural and urban ones where the weights are proportion of rural and urban women in total women. Mortality data are partially based on sample survey and we assume that they also follow the sampling design of NFHS-2.

Application, Analysis and Discussion

The Empowerment Index: We have seen that the social, cultural and biological factors are primarily at the root of deprivation of women. Economic factors are secondary as they aggravate the situation. Though a strong debate persists in literature on the question of the root of women's deprivation, this study incorporates all ideas giving equal importance to each of them. If the prevalence of social and cultural forms of deprivation is high in any society, less participation of women in development projects as compared to that of men are likely to be observed. The first three indices under the title Education and Autonomy have been computed to show to what extent women are free from social and cultural barriers. In the second stage the focus moves from ideology to reality just to look at the physical, mental and social well being of women. Two indices have been

computed in this regard under the title Morbidity and Mortality. As women are believed to suffer to a great extent for their biological activities: procreation, care, rear, nurture and so on, two indices have been computed to show less suffering from these activities.

Table 5 and 6 display the values of 7 indices and the index of empowerment in urban rural category (and table 10 for combined category) for 16 major States of India.

As 0 and 1 are the minimum and maximum values for all the indices, a 0 score for a State does not mean no empowerment but least empowerment as compared to other States. Similarly, the score of 1 for a State does not always mean the maximum possible upper limit but best performance among all States. However, for some indices based on ratios a score of 1 may indicate 0 gender gap but does not indicate the limit of any qualitative improvement.

If we assume that a score lower than 0.500, between 0.500 and 0.750 and 0.750+ indicate low, medium and high levels in the empowerment process respectively then we can classify the States as follows:

Table 3. Classification of States in the Urban category

	Urban			
	I-ea	I-mm	I-wn	I-emp
High (0.75+)	KE, GU, PU, HP	KA, PU, KE	GU, MH, OR, AP, TN, KA, HA, HP, WB, PU, AS, KE	HA, PU, HP, KE
Medium (0.500- 0.750)	AP, UP, BI, WB, AS, KA, TN, MH, HA	UP, TN, BI, OR, RA, AP, HA, HP	RA, UP, MA, BI	RA, MH, AS, UP, OR, BI, AP, WB, MH, GU, TN, KA
Low (0- 0.500)	MA, OR, RA	AS, MH, GU, MA, WB	-	-

I= index, ea= education-autonomy, mm= morbidity-mortality, wn= work-nurture, emp= empowerment

Table 4. Classification of States in the Rural category

	Rural			
	I-ea	I-mm	I-wn	I-emp
High (0.75+)	TN	PU, HP, KE	AS, RU, KE	HP, PU, KE
Medium (0.500- 0.750)	KA, HA, AS, MH, OR	KA, HA, TN, RA, AP, GU	AP, KA, TN, HA, HP, OR, WB	HA, TN
Low (0- 0.500)	UP, WB, MA, BI, RA, AP, PU, GU, KE, HP	AS, BI, WB, MH, MA, OR, UP	RA, MA, GU, UP, MH, BI	RA, MA, UP, MH, BI, WB, OR, AS, KA, GU, AP

I= index, ea= education-autonomy, mm= morbidity-mortality, wn= work-nurture, emp= empowerment

Our classification clearly reveals that urban women are more empowered than rural women are. Within the urban category most of the women are at the medium stage of empowerment process. Low levels of TFR and low work participation rate in family farm/business in urban areas pull some States from the bottom to the medium level. In the rural category most of the women are at the low stage of empowerment process.

Justification of developing the Index of Empowerment: As HDI at State level is available, do we really need another index of Empowerment of women? If there is perfect correlation between HDI and the Index of Empowerment (I-emp) then we will have no option other than drooping I-emp. Obviously this is not the case as revealed by table 9. Only life expectancy at birth (le) has high correlation with I-emp. However, it could explain 71.4 per cent variability (after adjustment) in I-emp.

Second question is that whether any of the individual indices is sensitive enough to reflect the behaviour of others or the composite I-emp. However, data from table 7 and 8 do not indicate that one index adequately represents another.

Besides statistical interpretation, one thing needs to be mentioned that as the study incorporates many ideas indicators have also been chosen accordingly.

Finally, as a wide gap persists between urban and rural category does it reveal that a communication gap or a gap of any other form prevails between the two? If yes (probably no), then empowerment in urban area is merely an urbanism that has nothing to do with rural backwardness. If not (thanks to the revolution in communication and information technology or movement of people from one place to another), then could this paper explain the underlying causes behind this gap? One can accept 'yes' or 'no' or both or ignore those totally. But how could one justify the methods of measuring level and progress of the empowerment process counting rare participation of women in decision making positions?

Limitation and Conclusion

Growing literature on ecofeminism and/or feminist environmentalism related status of women with the degradation of nature and environment. However, collecting information on environmental change in the States is beyond the scope of this study. The study utilized mostly data from sample survey, namely NFHS-2 which is proved to be sound enough statistically to generalize results. The case of Assam should be studied preciously as it has least urban fertility but highest excess female mortality. While tracing the path of women's deprivation in India and highlighting the masculinity of the past, many times we have forgotten the geographical domain and traveled across the globe. However, all these are to explore the possibilities to fulfil our objectives within the scope and make our task fruitful.

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Table 5. Indices of Empowerment of 16 major States of India (Urban)

States	Education and Autonomy				Morbidity and Mortality			Work and Nurture			Index of Empow erment
	I - edu	I - dhc	I - am	I - ea	I - mob	I - mot	I - mm	I - wrk	I - tfr	I - wt	I - emp
AP	0.510	0.469	0.561	0.513	0.492	0.783	0.637	0.854	0.794	0.824	0.638
AS	0.702	0.718	0.431	0.617	0.128	0.000	0.064	0.911	1.000	0.955	0.556
BI	0.476	0.415	0.763	0.551	0.265	0.888	0.577	0.905	0.549	0.727	0.609
GU	0.596	0.913	0.837	0.782	0.638	0.296	0.467	0.841	0.700	0.770	0.689
HA	0.655	0.658	0.915	0.743	0.520	0.845	0.682	0.989	0.740	0.865	0.760
HP	0.706	1.000	1.000	0.902	0.660	0.816	0.738	0.957	0.913	0.935	0.865
KA	0.611	0.442	0.806	0.620	0.709	0.802	0.756	0.862	0.859	0.861	0.727
KE	0.802	0.797	0.676	0.759	1.000	0.939	0.969	0.968	0.996	0.982	0.883
MA	0.501	0.193	0.607	0.434	0.516	0.418	0.467	0.849	0.599	0.724	0.526
MH	1.000	0.500	0.704	0.735	0.069	0.762	0.416	0.903	0.733	0.818	0.667
OR	0.544	0.112	0.580	0.412	0.353	0.864	0.608	0.897	0.751	0.824	0.586
PU	0.756	0.807	0.965	0.843	0.647	0.901	0.774	0.989	0.895	0.942	0.852
RA	0.435	0.270	0.403	0.369	0.505	0.746	0.626	0.784	0.473	0.628	0.517
TN	0.593	0.618	0.856	0.689	0.413	0.712	0.563	0.914	0.776	0.845	0.697
UP	0.566	0.367	0.647	0.527	0.518	0.504	0.511	0.908	0.509	0.709	0.574
WB	0.579	0.500	0.611	0.563	0.295	0.683	0.489	0.941	0.931	0.936	0.649

Footnote: '97-'99 Data

Table 6. . Indices of Empowerment of 16 major States of India (Rural)

States	Education and Autonomy				Morbidity and Mortality			Work and Nurture			Index of Empow erment
	I - edu	I - dhc	I - am	I - ea	I - mob	I - mot	I - mm	I - wrk	I - tfr	I - wt	I - emp
AP	0.281	0.450	0.384	0.372	0.430	0.788	0.609	0.414	0.704	0.559	0.493
AS	0.507	0.633	0.000	0.380	0.083	0.372	0.227	0.876	0.679	0.777	0.450
BI	0.113	0.261	0.566	0.313	0.180	0.446	0.313	0.746	0.253	0.499	0.366
GU	0.312	0.666	0.606	0.528	0.422	0.876	0.649	0.032	0.466	0.249	0.483
HA	0.286	0.695	0.552	0.511	0.488	0.562	0.525	0.889	0.426	0.658	0.557
HP	0.523	0.965	0.798	0.762	0.617	1.000	0.809	0.662	0.755	0.708	0.760
KA	0.382	0.243	0.474	0.366	0.518	0.522	0.520	0.403	0.733	0.568	0.468
KE	0.786	0.795	0.545	0.708	0.944	0.876	0.910	0.938	0.794	0.866	0.811
MA	0.192	0.000	0.173	0.122	0.310	0.432	0.371	0.114	0.271	0.192	0.213
MH	0.249	0.203	0.427	0.293	0.000	0.708	0.354	0.127	0.552	0.340	0.324
OR	0.322	0.087	0.189	0.199	0.178	0.701	0.439	0.805	0.643	0.724	0.418
PU	0.561	0.969	0.708	0.746	0.582	0.979	0.780	1.000	0.668	0.834	0.781
RA	0.000	0.087	0.045	0.044	0.456	0.748	0.602	0.000	0.094	0.047	0.204
TN	0.397	0.525	0.766	0.563	0.272	0.790	0.531	0.627	0.625	0.626	0.572
UP	0.137	0.183	0.258	0.193	0.454	0.449	0.452	0.608	0.000	0.304	0.298
WB	0.380	0.141	0.230	0.250	0.174	0.509	0.342	0.835	0.653	0.744	0.418

Footnote: '97-'99 Data

Table 7. Correlation coefficients and their significant levels among the indices in the Rural category.

		l-emp	l-edu	l-dhc	l-am	l-mob	l-mot	l-wrk	l-tfr
Correln	l-emp	1.000	.868	.895	.712	.626	.663	.614	.712
	l-edu	.868	1.000	.718	.401	.474	.435	.595	.821
	l-dhc	.895	.718	1.000	.663	.542	.619	.461	.517
	l-am	.712	.401	.663	1.000	.413	.619	.213	.361
	l-mob	.626	.474	.542	.413	1.000	.522	.184	.166
	l-mot	.663	.435	.619	.619	.522	1.000	-.019	.423
	l-wrk	.614	.595	.461	.213	.184	-.019	1.000	.410
	l-tfr	.712	.821	.517	.361	.166	.423	.410	1.000
Sig. (1-td)	l-emp		.000	.000	.001	.005	.003	.006	.001
	l-edu	.000		.001	.062	.032	.046	.008	.000
	l-dhc	.000	.001		.003	.015	.005	.036	.020
	l-am	.001	.062	.003		.056	.005	.214	.085
	l-mob	.005	.032	.015	.056		.019	.247	.270
	l-mot	.003	.046	.005	.005	.019		.472	.051
	l-wrk	.006	.008	.036	.214	.247	.472		.057
	l-tfr	.001	.000	.020	.085	.270	.051	.057	

Table 8. Correlation coefficients and their significant levels among the indices in the Urban category.

		l-emp	l-edu	l-dhc	l-am	l-mob	l-mot	l-wrk	l-tfr
Correln	l-emp	1.000	.562	.757	.764	.611	.503	.699	.615
	l-edu	.562	1.000	.506	.322	-.039	.091	.538	.532
	l-dhc	.757	.506	1.000	.600	.352	-.080	.513	.588
	l-am	.764	.322	.600	1.000	.364	.389	.570	.208
	l-mob	.611	-.039	.352	.364	1.000	.327	.134	.178
	l-mot	.503	.091	-.080	.389	.327	1.000	.323	.007
	l-wrk	.699	.538	.513	.570	.134	.323	1.000	.571
	l-tfr	.615	.532	.588	.208	.178	.007	.571	1.000
Sig. (1-td)	l-emp		.012	.000	.000	.006	.024	.001	.006
	l-edu	.012		.023	.112	.443	.369	.016	.017
	l-dhc	.000	.023		.007	.091	.384	.021	.008
	l-am	.000	.112	.007		.083	.068	.011	.220
	l-mob	.006	.443	.091	.083		.108	.311	.254
	l-mot	.024	.369	.384	.068	.108		.111	.490
	l-wrk	.001	.016	.021	.011	.311	.111		.010
	l-tfr	.006	.017	.008	.220	.254	.490	.010	

Table 9. Correlation coefficients and their significant levels among Empowerment Index (combined), HDI-1997 and its components

		I-emp	HDI97	SDP	Lifexpt	Enrol	Litcy
Correln	I-emp	1.000	.846	.537	.856	.649	.679
	HDI-97	.846	1.000	.753	.908	.830	.780
	SDP	.537	.753	1.000	.601	.496	.311
	Lifexpt	.856	.908	.601	1.000	.667	.661
	Enrol	.649	.830	.496	.667	1.000	.752
	Litcy	.679	.780	.311	.661	.752	1.000
Sig. (1-td)	I-emp		.000	.016	.000	.003	.002
	HDI-97	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	SDP	.016	.000		.007	.025	.120
	Lifexpt	.000	.000	.007		.002	.003
	Enrol	.003	.000	.025	.002		.000
	Litcy	.002	.000	.120	.003	.000	

Table 10. Combined Empowerment Index

States	I-emp	Rank	States	I-emp	Rank
AP	0.531	8	MA	0.295	15
AS	0.475	11	MH	0.527	9
BI	0.390	13	OR	0.451	12
GU	0.571	6	PU	0.806	2
HA	0.615	5	RA	0.277	16
HP	0.789	3	TN	0.629	4
KA	0.557	7	UP	0.352	14
KE	0.832	1	WB	0.520	10